

**Texas House of Representatives
Higher Education Committee
Request for Information
Interim Charge 4**



Question 6: How can the Legislature address gaps in equity in accessing reliable, affordable Internet access?

With the lingering impact of COVID-19, higher educational institutions across our nation are forced to rely on distance learning to educate students. The reality is that millions of college students across the country lack the internet connectivity required to access online learning resources.

According to Connected Nation, at least 333,000 households in Texas are unconnected at the broadband speed defined by the FCC. For many homes, lack of access is a result of a lack of broadband infrastructure in their area. In other homes, the costs associated with broadband service prohibit students from purchasing connectivity.

To be fully prepared to respond to these equity challenges and help expand broadband access across the state, the Legislature should prioritize the development of a state broadband plan which takes an informed, data-driven look at where broadband is lacking, hindrances to broadband adoption, and how communities and the state can leverage current federal funding and state resources to bridge the Digital Divide.

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